

Kigungu community translates climate



Kigungu Primary School learners, administrators and well wishers plant fruit trees during the Jane Goodall Day. PHOTOS/DAPHINE NAKABIRI

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BY DAPHINE NAKABIRI

In Kigungu Ward B, a lakeside community found in Entebbe Municipality along the shores of Lake Victoria, the effects of environmental neglect have gradually grown into a pressing concern, shaping the health, environment and livelihoods of residents. At Kigungu Landing Site Market, residents face the impact of rising lake water levels which have gradually encroached on sections of the landing site, disrupting fishing activities and limiting space for trade. During the dry season, intense heat tends to set in, which is even worsened by the limited tree cover and shrinking green spaces, exposing traders and residents to uncomfortable and sometimes

harmful conditions. For a community that depends largely on the lake for survival, poor waste management continues to strain natural ecosystems, with increasing pollution and human activity threatening both the water body and the livelihoods it supports, making urgent intervention vital. Against this backdrop, during the inaugural Jane Goodall Day celebration at Kigungu Primary School, the Jane Goodall Institute in Uganda mobilized the public into taking action to protect and conserve the environment, other animals and all living things as a way to keep Jane's legacy alive. According to Mr James Byabakama, the Executive Director of the Jane Goodall Institute in Uganda, the initiative is aimed at not only strengthening the Roots & Shoots club at Kigungu Primary School and across Uganda, but also

to significantly raise awareness about environmental conservation among both pupils and community members. He said, "This day presents a turning point, from broad approaches to focus on way of hope that is rooted in the interconnectedness of nature." Mr Byabakama added, "The annual celebrations will keep Jane's message of hope alive through inspiring actions and demonstrating the harmonious connection between people, other animals and the environment we all share." Mr Byabakama further noted that the when residents and the young people are equipped with knowledge, environmental conservation shifts from being an individual effort to a collective responsibility, where individual actions inspire others creating



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a ripple effect that empowers communities to take deliberate steps in protecting their surroundings. **Turning climate awareness into action** While human activities continue to drive climate change, the Kigungu community leveraged on the Jane Goodall Day to turn their awareness on climate change and its effects into practical action to be able to bring the message of conservation to life. As such, pupils, teachers, community members, and staff from the Jane Goodall Institute took part in a tree-planting exercise aimed at restoring green cover in the area. In Kigungu, at least 40 fruit trees were planted within the school and surrounding community, while additional seedlings were distributed to households for planting at home. Mr Byabakama highlighted that while the activity is aimed at nurturing environmental responsibility from a young age, it also underscores the critical role

individuals play in addressing climate challenges such as rising temperatures and environmental degradation. He noted that increasing tree cover can improve shade, enhance air quality, and provide long-term benefits, including fruits for nutrition. For Ms RoseMary Namuyomba, the Inspector of Schools in Entebbe Municipal Council, speaking on behalf of the Principal Education Officer Entebbe, encouraged learners to take ownership of the trees planted, noting that such efforts not only improve the environment, but also contribute to better livelihoods. She noted, "Building a sustainable future begins with planting a tree with purpose, whether for fruit, shade, or medicine, and ensuring it grows." Ms Namuyomba further urged elders and community members to play an active role in guiding children, noting that when young people understand the value of trees, they are more likely to protect them. Trees, she added, are a source

awareness into action

of livelihood as they provide materials for furniture and firewood, as well as fruits that contribute to household nutrition. Beyond Kigungu, the activity forms part of a wider initiative under the Roots & Shoots programme, through which more than 3,500 trees are being planted, contributing to broader efforts to restore degraded ecosystems. Further still, Mr Byabakama observed that communities around markets are often associated with poor sanitation conditions, making it important to extend conservation efforts to Kigungu Landing Site Market. He noted that engaging such spaces is key in addressing the growing challenge of waste management and reducing pollution flowing into Lake Victoria. In a bid to improve hygiene and environmental health, community members were equipped with cleaning tools such as brooms and rakes to clear garbage from market spaces and surrounding areas. According to Ms Prossy Nalubuye, the Vice Chairperson and a businesswoman in Kigungu, she explained that poor sanitation remains a persistent challenge that both vendors and residents must collectively address. She acknowledged the contribution of pupils in leading the clean-up exercise, noting that their involvement helps not only influence behaviour among adults, but also sets an example for the wider community and encourages others to take responsibility for maintaining a cleaner environment. "Sanitation is a problem here, but when young people come

and help clean, it encourages us older ones to also take responsibility. This not only promotes health, but also helps attract buyers," she said. For many of the learners, the experience marked a shift in perspective. Sharuwa Namigadde a primary seven learner said that participating in the clean-up and tree planting helped her understand their role in protecting the environment. "I have learnt that taking care of the environment starts with us. If we plant trees and keep our places clean, we can live a longer life," the pupil said.

The Jane Goodall Day Whereas April 3, has been previously celebrated as Dr. Jane Goodall's birthday, following her passing, the day has been declared 'Jane Goodall Day', which is celebrated annually by all the Jane Goodall Institute Chapters and people across the world. The day often involves engaging youth, children and adults into participating in activities that matters to them and inspire others to make their own impact and find hope. These include planting trees, community clean-ups, donating to a cause, choosing plant-based meals, advocating for animal welfare, and sharing what Jane meant to them using #JaneGoodallDay on social media. This initiative is in keeping with the ethos of Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots, a youth programme which inspires people to take on projects that benefit people, other animals, and their shared environment. In Uganda, the Jane Goodall Institute has continued to advance this vision through

LOOKING AHEAD

In Uganda, the Jane Goodall Institute has continued to advance this vision through several conservation and community-based initiatives, including, the National Chimpanzee Conservation Strategy, expansion of ecotourism in Kibale National Park, Kaniyo Pabidi, and Budongo Forest, as well as restoration of the Albertine Rift Forest Corridor. These efforts have involved reconnecting fragmented chimpanzee habitats through large-scale tree planting, improving community livelihoods through sustainable income activities such as beekeeping, coffee farming, and agroforestry, and reducing dependence on forest resources.

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Pupils of Kigungu Primary School participate in the cleaning of Kigungu Market.